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Acceptance: Why is it so Hard?

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Acceptance: Why is it so Hard?

I find that it is hard to be a teen in the year 2012. There are so many aspects of life I have to keep up with. Trends, gossip, and status are all things I focus in on. Coming from different backgrounds, I find that every person has a different outlook on life and different priorities. I find myself, sometimes, focusing so hard on social status that I make it my utmost priority. I tend to forget about the important things like family, friends, school, and sports. I lose myself, a little, along the way and become someone my loved ones do not know anymore. Why did I change? What makes me want to become someone else? Acceptance- that is what it is all about. I do not want to be known as a nerd, a geek, or a loner. I, like every other teen, feel I "want to" or "need to" belong to a group or clique. Is it really that important or should it be? Is becoming part of something so important that it is worth losing myself over?

One reason, and in some cases the main reason, that I found people become excluded is because of things they cannot control. Some reasons I found are ethnic background and origin of life. All throughout history, I can see examples of this type of exclusion. I think that ethnic exclusion is the same in 2012 as it was during the era of Martin Luther King Jr. I heard of some ethnicities teaching their children to despise other ethnicities. Granted, I believe that today is not as bad as in the past and we have moved forward in the accepting process, but it is still not perfect. I have lived in an area where my ethnicity is the minority. Later I moved to an area where my ethnicity is now the majority. Having been a part of a minority, I find that I am educated in accepting different races. Here at my current school, the majority, of which I am a part of, is not as accepting as I am because they have never been the minority. Why should people exclude someone based on the color of their skin? Does that mean we should, for example, judge a white person that tans by the color of their skin after tanning? I believe that it is the same thing.

I have also seen, and been a victim of, people who exclude others because of where they come from. When I moved, I did not come from the nicest of areas. I also did not have the nicest of clothes. We were not poor, but having name brand clothes was not a priority for me. Kids here have nice homes and wear name brand clothing. When I arrived, some teens here did not even take the time to talk to me because my clothes were not name brand. Over time they found out where I came from. People started talking to me, but it was for all the wrong reasons. They wanted to know things like, "How did you survive living there without getting shot?" or "Oh, so you are from the ghetto?" None of these things were even remotely true. They figured that I was "ghetto" and did not associate with me. As the years passed, I have gained more friends that don't worry about those things. I just could not believe that people would exclude me because of the place I moved from.

Another big reason for excluding, I have noticed, is disabilities. Teens I have gone to school with disrespect special needs kids. Those teens act like the special needs kids have a disease and if they go near them, they will catch it. I have heard people call them retards, stupid, weird, and gross. The special needs kids may not even be able to comprehend what those teens are saying, but I can comprehend it. I take

offense to it. My cousin will be growing up with severe Autism. He will battle everyday with kids teasing him and treating him differently. I find it unfair because these kids can not help the disability they have. They did not ask to be born with it. Teens need to learn that the term retarded is not a substitute for stupid. Teens will use this word out of context and try to offend others. Even if the kid himself cannot understand that he is being teased, his friends and family will understand and will be offended. I will fight for my cousin as he grows up because it is not fair to him, the friends he will have, or his family for him to be treated that way.

So what do those kids do to fit in then? When a teen realizes they are being excluded, I have seen that they do everything in their power to change. Can they change everything about themselves though? No, they cannot; some things are stuck the way they are. So what happens when what they want to change cannot be changed? Where do they turn next? I have seen this question lead to trouble. I have seen teens turn to alternatives when they do not fit in with their wanted clique, their peers, or society in general. They try to be accepted by any group at all. I have seen some instances where the alternative turns out for the better. I have also seen instances where the alternatives turn out for the worst, which is more often the case.

I believe that nobody should ever feel left out or unwanted. Does it happen? Unfortunately yes, and I know that it will continue throughout the rest of my life. I have learned to not worry about the people that do not want me. I know there is always someone out there who wants to stick by my side. Everyone has that special someone - they just have to find them. I believe that nobody should change who they are to please others. I know, from experience, that if someone loses themselves, they will not like the person they become. I think teens should find people that share common interests with them and form their own "clique" (in this instance clique refers to acceptance within their peer group), so they will truly be happy. If teens learn to stay themselves and have fun with their friends, they will always be accepted in one way or another. Acceptance comes in many forms, they just have to see it.